

The President's Daily Brief

24 March 1970

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

24 March 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Speaking from Peking, Sihanouk has embarked on a campaign to shake the resolve of the Lon Nol government. (Page 1)

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CAMBODIA

From Peking yesterday, Sihanouk broadcast a message to the Cambodian people calling for the establishment of a "government of national unity" and a "national liberation army" to overthrow the "reactionary fascists." He promised arms and ammunition to his followers and claimed that a "military school" would be established to provide training. He stated that "formal support" from socialist countries would be forthcoming, and implied the struggle would be undertaken in cooperation with Communist forces.

Sihanouk's penchant for theatrics may account for some of the points in his statement, but it is also heavily larded with Communist jargon. This plus the fact that it was issued in Peking--probably with the blessing of the visiting North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong--strongly suggests that the Communists are backing Sihanouk's current maneuver. A Hanoi domestic broadcast on 23 March commenting on Sihanouk's earlier statement regarding the "illegality" of the Phnom Penh leadership, voiced support for the Prince's efforts to rid Cambodia of the "coup makers."

Despite the evidence of support, it is not clear how far Hanoi is willing to go at present to back Sihanouk against the new regime in Phnom Penh. The Communists may hope that Sihanouk's statements will create a climate of doubt and dissension among the new government's backers that could shake the resolve of Lon Nol and Sirik Matak.

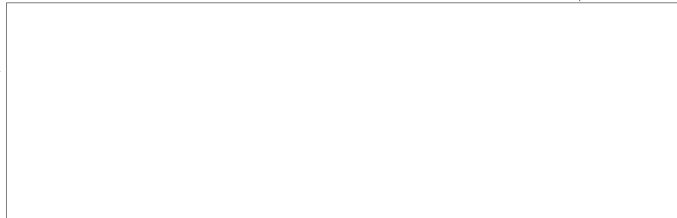
Hanoi may also hope that the "support" already given Sihanouk will cause Lon Nol and Matak to accommodate Communist interests in Cambodia. Recent statements by Lon Nol suggest that Phnom Penh's anti-Vietnamese rhetoric is now giving way to a more sober appreciation of the problems Cambodia faces. If he and Matak do not give way, however, the existence of a Sihanouk-led "liberation movement" provides the Communists with the cover for more forceful measures.

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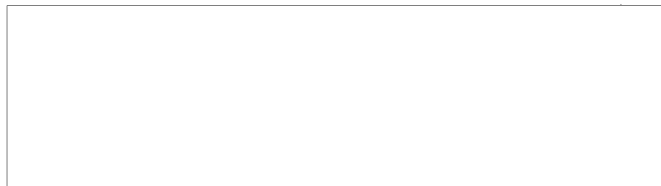
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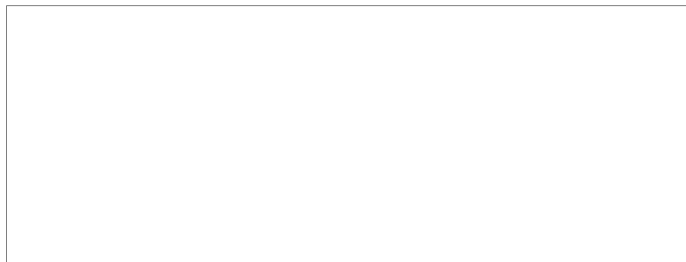
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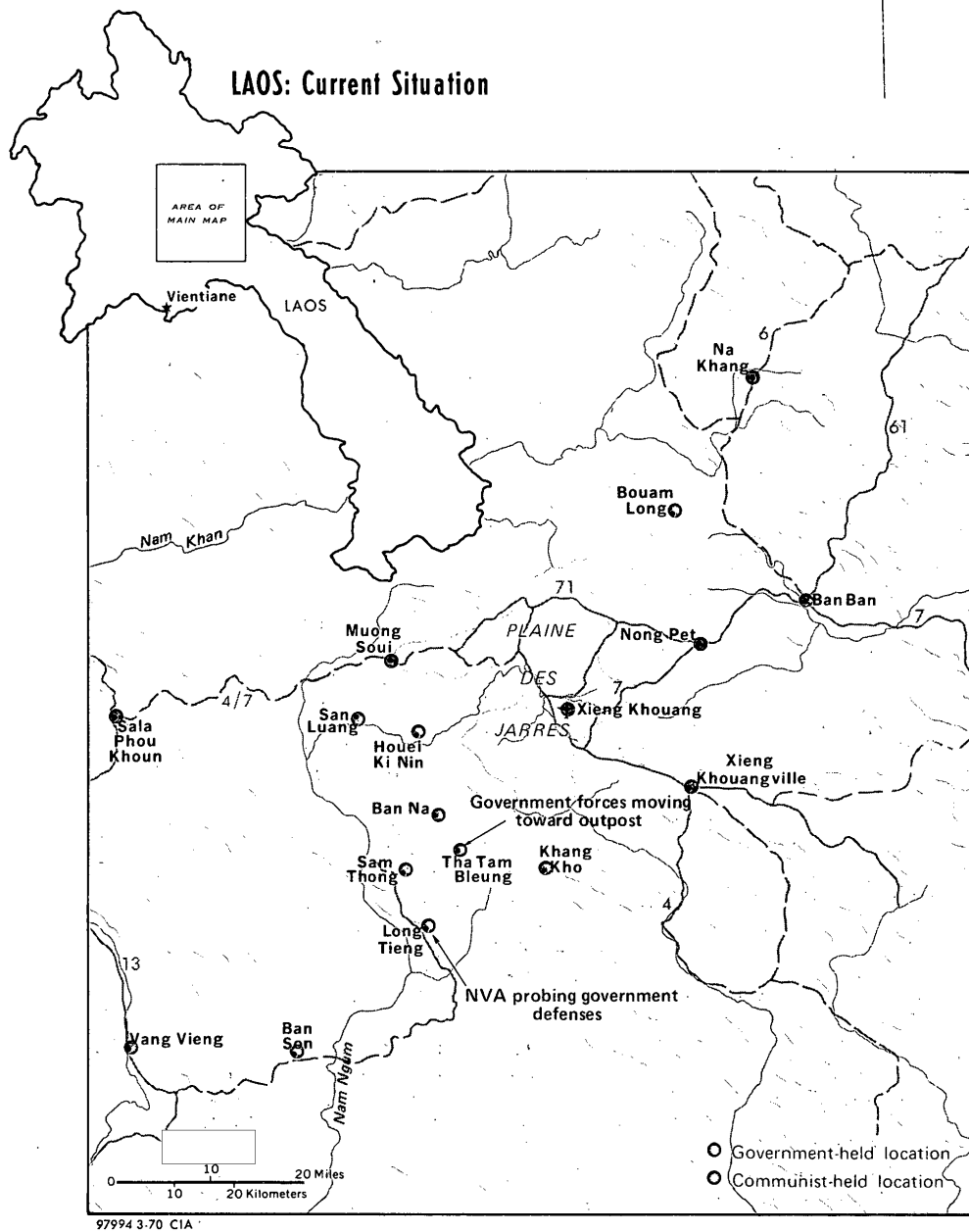
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On the military front, North Vietnamese forces have carried out several heavy, but unsuccessful, probing attacks against the Long Tieng perimeter. According to a recently intercepted enemy message, North Vietnamese forces were urged to overcome these defenses at the "earliest possible time." North of the base, government guerrillas began moving back into the Tha Tam Bleung area and will attempt to regain the high ground overlooking this former government outpost within the next few days.

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WEST GERMANY - EAST GERMANY

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NOTES

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Albania - Western Europe: Requests by Tirana for diplomatic and economic ties with Denmark, Belgium, Norway, Greece, and possibly the Netherlands, do not indicate strains in the Sino-Albanian axis or a change in Albania's ideological orientation. They are the result of Albania's growing self-confidence in its political stability and recognition that there can be economic and even political profits, at low cost, from such ties.

Initial responses to the Albanian overtures vary with the distance from Tirana. Copenhagen and Oslo were the most receptive, whereas a resumption of Greek-Albanian relations is only a long-range possibility. The Greek claim to southern Albania is a major stumbling block--the two states technically are still at war. Some progress in restoring economic ties is being made, however.

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